

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 32836 051717Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 /066 W

----- 113623

R 051702Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6858

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 32836

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC VISITS PRESIDENT
GISCARD D'ESTAING

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S
RESIGNATION ON AUGUST 25 OF THIS YEAR, HE AND PRESIDENT
GISCARD D'ESTAING MET FACE TO FACE NOVEMBER 4 FOR THE
PURPOSE OF TALKING POLITICS. PREVIOUS INVITATIONS FROM
THE ELYSEE TO CHIRAC, MOST NOTABLY THAT FOR A DINNER IN
HONOR OF VISITING SPANISH KING JUAN CARLOS, HAD BEEN
DECLINED BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE PRETEXT THAT HE
WAS OBLIGED TO PREPARE FOR THE LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION
IN WHICH HE WILL BE RUNNING IN HIS NATIVE CORREZE LATER
THIS MONTH. CHIRAC MADE NO STATEMENT AT THE CLOSE OF
THE 80-MINUTE INTERVIEW EXCEPT TO CONFIRM TO NEWSMEN
THAT HE AND THE PRESIDENT HAD AGREED THAT NO PUBLIC
COMMENT WOULD BE MADE.

2. THAT SUCH A MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE AT ALL, IN
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PAGE 02 PARIS 32836 051717Z

VIEW OF THE SERIOUS STRAINS THAT NOW EXIST BETWEEN THE
ELYSEE AND THE CHIRACISTS (WHO COMPRISE THE RIGHT WING

OF THE CENTRISTS AND THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS AS WELL AS A MAJORITY OF UDR DEPUTIES) IS NO DOUBT WELCOMED BY GISCARD, AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT WILL EASE THE STRAINS THAT HAVE LONG MANIFESTED THEMSELVES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY. THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT THE PRESIDENT MAY HAVE ASKED CHIRAC TO PLACE HIMSELF, PUBLICLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY, IN THE PRESIDENT'S CAMP AND TO INSERT THE IDEA OF A PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY A BIT MORE INTO UDR (CHIRACIAN) STRATEGY. IN ESSENCE, THE PRESIDENT MAY HAVE WISHED TO EFFECT A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE BETWEEN CHIRAC'S "RASSEMBLEMENT" AND HIS OWN "PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY." AS BOTH MEN HAVE PUBLICLY ADVOCATED PLURALISM IN POLITICS, AND AS BOTH MEN STAND TO LOSE SHOULD EFFORTS TO COOPERATE FAIL, THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AT LONG LAST A CERTAIN CALMING OF POLITICAL WATERS MAY TAKE PLACE IN THE MAJORITY CAMP.

3. SIGNIFICANT ALSO IS THE FACT THAT THE MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE SHORTLY BEFORE THE DECEMBER 5 NATIONAL ASSIZES OF THE UDR CALLED FOR BY CHIRAC (PARIS 28786). ONE OBSERVER CORRECTLY POINTS OUT THAT CHIRAC IS ABLE TO ENJOY THE "MARVELOUS AMBIGUITY WHICH CONSISTS OF BELONGING TO THE MAJORITY COALITION WHILE APPEARING AT THE SAME TIME AS A POTENTIAL OPPONENT OF THE CHIEF OF STATE." THE ASSIZES WILL VERY LIKELY CONFIRM HIM NOT ONLY AS THE LEADER OF THE GAULLISTS, BUT ALSO AS A POTENTIAL LEADER OF THE MAJORITY, A TITLE WHICH FELL TO HIM UNDER HIS TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER, BUT WHICH RANG EVER HOLLOW WHILE HE REMAINED IN OFFICE.

4. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRESIDENT WAS MEETING WITH CHIRAC, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UDR WAS DISCUSSING, AND EVENTUALLY CONFIRMING, ITS OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THROUGH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS SUBJECT WAS ALSO RAISED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CHIRAC, SINCE IT PROMISES TO BE A MAJOR BONE OF CONTENTION WHEN IT COMES UP FOR DISCUSSION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THIS SPRING. HERE AGAIN BOTH MEN MAY HAVE FOUND A COMMON MEETING GROUND; CHIRAC HAS
CONFIDENTIAL
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PAGE 03 PARIS 32836 051717Z

LONG BEEN CONSIDERED FAR LESS OPPOSED TO THE IDEA OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTED THROUGH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE THAN HAVE SUCH GAULLIST ELDER STATESMEN SUCH AS DEBRE AND SANGUINETTI. WE BELIEVE THAT OTHER MEETINGS MAY VERY LIKELY TAKE PLACE BETWEEN GISCARD AND CHIRAC IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THE CALMING EFFECT THAT WILL PRESUMABLY BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE CURRENT ONE.
RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, PARTY LEADERS, MEETING REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS32836
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760414-0821
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761176/aaaacogt.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC VISITS PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING
TAGS: PINT, FR, (GISCARD D'ESTAING, VALERY), (CHIRAC, JACQUES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006